

Westfälischer Kunstverein

Rothenburg 30,
48143 Münster
westfaelischer-
kunstverein.de

Opening times:
Wed-Sun: 11 am - 7 pm

Entrance: 4 €,
Concessions: 2 €,
free admission to members

Taslina Ahmed **Canvas Automata** **18 March - 11 June 2023**

As a painter, Taslima Ahmed (b. 1982 in Liverpool, UK) asks herself questions about which developments are currently changing and renewing this centuries-old cultural technique. The engagement with past epochs, styles and fashions invariably reflects the respective *zeitgeist*, a socio-political mood, an artistic critique. If one acknowledges this eminently seismographic potential of art, one may also ask what is it then that shapes the portraits of *our* present.

For a long time now, our perception of the world and thus its representation in art has been influenced by digital technologies, viz. AI and algorithms that attempt to imitate human ways of seeing and creativity. Will this developmental step fall in with the time-honoured sequence of changing painting traditions and models of the world that are reflected in them?

Trained at the Städelschule, Ahmed abandoned the practice of analogue painting in 2007 and, against the backdrop of increasing technologisation, devoted herself to fundamental questions about the nature of painting: is painting primarily a cerebral exercise? Does it have to be done by hand? Where does the hand begin? As a painter, Taslima Ahmed knows how to make a painting using a brush and paint in the traditional manner. But on the computer screen, everything is different. How can the various stylistic means of painting – such as chiaroscuro, impasto, perspective and three-dimensionality – be generated digitally?

This is the point where Ahmed engages, plunging into the dynamic interface of artificial intelligence and human perception, but always emphasising the interdependencies between man and machine: her paintings are made because a human controls a machine (unlike AI-generated images) and – in Ahmed's case – challenges it.

The aspect of simulation is imperative in this context: some AI models simulate an object, an image on a purely phenomenological level – it remains opaque to us how AI actually arrives at this end product. Which data sets, which information did it draw on? The process remains something of a black box phenomenon. However, for a long time now there have also been computational models based on neuronal, genetic and reproductive processes and thus able to imitate (human) life, growth, reproduction and evolution.

Ahmed uses various computational models, AI, means of digital image production and printing techniques to reconstruct the illusion and haptic scope of analogue painting. Based on media-theoretical and philosophical considerations, as well as references to the history of painting, she generates motifs with which she charts the limits of these technologies and, at the same time, attests the uniqueness of human perception. If you will, Ahmed enacts her own Turing tests.

It is also about an emancipatory gesture towards a centuries-old tradition of painting and the burden of constant innovation, as well as the ubiquity and ever-increasing influence of digital technologies. By familiarising herself with the complex world of digital technology and its scope, Ahmed frees herself from a passive role and evolves from a patronised consumer into a pioneering challenger.

Last but not least, the works (all the more so in their strictly classical staging in a white cube) create a powerful simulation of analogue painting, namely the familiar phenomenon of paint on canvas that we are accustomed to viewing in an exhibition. But this simulation, this model of the world, subsides the moment the viewer realises that neither oil paint nor paint brushes were deployed. The questions triggered by this moment of reflection on the interpretation of one's own perception are the productive yet seemingly indigestible essence of these artworks.

Curated by Kristina Scepanski

Programme

Thursday, 20 April 2023 at 6 pm

Guided tour with the curator Kristina Scepanski

Friday, 12 May 2023 at 5 pm

Guided tour with the curator Kristina Scepanski

Monday, 22 May 2023 at 8 pm

Film Presentation by Taslima Ahmed

Brett Leonard, *Virtuosity*, 1995 (in English)

at the Schloßtheater, 81 Melchersstraße, 48149 Münster

Admission: 8€/5€ for Kunstverein members with a Filmclub clubkarte

Tuesday, 23 May 2023 at 6 pm

Münster Lecture by Taslima Ahmed

Kunstakademie Münster, Leonardo-Campus 2, 48149 Münster

(in English)

Wednesday, 7 June 2023 at 6 pm

„Das Gehirn der Kunst“ (The Art Brain)

Lecture by Prof. E.-J. Speckmann

(Neurophysiology, University of Münster; Kunstakademie Münster)

Saturday, 10 June 2023 at noon

Guided tour with the curator Kristina Scepanski

More information on the accompanying programme is available via our Newsletter and Instagram.

Der Westfälische Kunstverein wird gefördert durch: